



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

David Reville, MPP

Riverdale

OPEN LETTER

March 14, 1989

The Honourable Elinor Caplan
Minister of Health
10th Floor, Hepburn Block
Queen's Park

Dear Mrs. Caplan:

I am writing to express my grave concerns about the inaction on the part of your government to assist the current needs of Ontario citizens suffering from severe and sometimes even life-threatening environmental sensitivities.

It is now three and a half years since the Ad Hoc Committee on Environmental Hypersensitivity Disorders, chaired by former Judge George Thomson, reported to your Ministry. I think it is fair to say that Judge Thomson's committee found that environmental sensitivities do exist and that Ontarians who suffer from such disorders have a tremendous need for medical and social support.

I applaud the February 10 announcement that your Ministry will be providing some \$600,000 for research into sensitivities caused by foods or chemical contaminants in foods. But while that initiative is laudable, it does nothing to address the current needs of environmentally sensitive people, using the medical information and social supports that already exist.

The reality of environmental sensitivity disorders is recognized in the medical community. In a recent letter to the Premier's Office, John Krauser of the Ontario Medical Association wrote: "The situation is that individuals are ill with a condition that has not been scientifically defined and they are not being well served in their need for support services. This situation is clearly frustrating for patients, physicians and government and requires careful attention to avoid blaming the victim.... There is widespread support for efforts to improve the ability of practising physicians to treat these patients."

While research is being conducted, your government should be doing whatever possible now to assist those

. . . over

suffering from the lack of support from the province for environmentally sensitive people. Actions could include the following:

- o Initiatives should be taken by the government to construct housing for the environmentally sensitive that is free of construction materials which cause toxic reactions.
- o Reasonable accomodation in workplaces should be afforded to the environmentally sensitive.
- o Those who require special diets that are a significant financial burden on the individual should receive assistance.
- o O.H.I.P. should pay the medical costs of all Ontario residents needing out-of-province treatment for environmental sensitivities when these medical services are not available in Ontario. Nova Scotia has taken this action for several patients in that province.
- o The Minsitry of Health should follow the lead of the government of Nova Scotia in funding one or more Ontario physicians to take training in the treatment of environmentally sensitive patients in other countries, for example in England.

Ontarians suffering from environmental sensitivities are frustrated at provincial inaction since Judge Thomson's 1985 report. While research may lead to help years down the road, it does nothing to address their daily needs right now. I would appreciate your outlining the steps beyond research that the government will be taking to help those Ontarians suffering from these debilitating illnesses.

Sincerely,



David Reville, MPP
Riverdale

c.c. The Hon. John Sweeney, Minister of Community and
Social Services
The Hon. James Bradley, Minister of the Environment
The Hon. Chaviva Hosek, Minister of Housing
Mr. Raj Anand, Ontario Human Rights Commission